

5

Cooking: The Wrong Way



5.1

Pre-reading

- Have you ever forgotten to do something? What happened as a result?
- Have you ever done any cooking? Was it successful? What did you cook?

Now read about Sylvia and find out what she did – or what she did *not* do.



5.2

Reading

Police and firemen were called to a house in Gurney Avenue yesterday evening after receiving reports of an explosion there. A police spokesman confirmed that there had been an explosion but gave no details. Chief Fire Officer Dave Abidola said that it was a domestic incident. Nobody was injured but damage was caused.

A report in *The Daily Gleaner*

And now here is the story behind the news:

Cooking: The Wrong Way

At about 5.30 p.m. last Friday, Sylvia Johnson was wrestling with a difficult Maths problem at home. She was anxious to finish her homework so that she would have the weekend free for basketball and a picnic.

'Sylvia,' her mother said, 'I'm off to a meeting at Mrs Ratnam's house. I'll be back in about two hours. Keep an eye on the stove in the kitchen. Don't let the water in the pot boil away. Put some more water in when the level is low.'

Sylvia looked up. 'Yes, Mummy,' she said. 'What are you cooking?'

'Fudge,' Mrs Johnson replied. 'Not our frozen kind but the English kind. Annie sent me a cookery book from London. She recommended a recipe for fudge. It's like soft toffee mixed with chocolate – and it's very easy to make. I've left some small tins in a pot with water in it. Don't forget: if the water boils away, put some more in. Bye bye.'

Mrs Johnson disappeared, leaving Sylvia to solve some Geometry problems. Her father was working on the computer in his bedroom. An hour later, Sylvia checked



15 on the pot and put some more water in it. Then she finished her Maths homework and started on her Science report.

At about 7 p.m. the peaceful scene at the Johnson home was shattered in a frightening way.

20 'Broooooom! Broooooom! Broooooom!' A series of explosions shook the house and left Sylvia shaking with fear. Her father rushed out wildly from his room and stared at Sylvia.

'What ... Where ...?' he blurted out.

25 Then a final 'Broooooom!' from the kitchen showed that something was wrong in there. Sylvia followed her father as he cautiously opened the kitchen door and peered inside.

The scene was one of chaos. 'So this is what Hell looks like!' Mr Johnson said. 'Ugh!' A string of brown slimy substance dripped down from the ceiling on his hair. Another string landed on Sylvia's right arm and oozed its way down to the floor. There were brown blobs on the ceiling, walls and floor.

30 It soon became clear what had happened. Sylvia had forgotten to put more water in the pot. All the water had boiled away, leaving four tins of condensed milk to become overheated. The tins had burst, showering the room with blobs and strings of hot fudge. Sylvia's heart sank lower and lower in her body while tears welled up and ran down her cheeks.

35 Within minutes, firemen and the police arrived, summoned by a helpful neighbour. There was nothing for them to do, so they were relieved to be sent away by an angry head of the house.

Mr Johnson recovered within a few minutes.

40 'We'd better start to clear this mess up,' he told Sylvia, 'before your mother returns. Something tells me that you aren't going to be very popular when she sees her precious kitchen.'

As it happened, Mr Johnson was not entirely right. When his wife returned, she was shocked at the mess in the kitchen. She scolded Sylvia and then added, 'Well, never mind. Nobody was hurt, and it's time the kitchen was redecorated anyway. I'll get somebody in to do it tomorrow.'

